

Rain Gardens

Have you heard about rain gardens?

When rain falls on hard surfaces, such as driveways, roads or parking lots, it flows over the surface and does not soak in. This runoff may pick up sediment, litter and debris, oil and grease, as well as pesticides and chemicals on its way to storm drains. The storm drains then empty into our streams, ponds, and lakes taking these pollutants with them.

Rain gardens are a creative solution to this problem. They are landscaped areas planted with wildflowers and other native vegetation which help to soak up the rain water. The gardens can be used by the homeowner to catch and filter runoff from roofs and lawns.

These gardens are beneficial in many ways. Along with filtering the water, they help with flooding and drainage problems, protect streams, ponds and lakes from pollutants, enhance the beauty of the neighborhood, and provide habitat for birds, butterflies and other beneficial insects.

For more information about rain gardens, go to <http://clean-water.uwex.edu/pubs/home.htm> Select "Home and Garden Clean Water Practices" from the Publications menu.



Wildlife Resistant Plants

Do you love to see deer in your yard but hate to see them eating your prize plants? What about the cute bunny or that chubby woodchuck?

Wildlife can be a nuisance. One way to avoid having your garden eaten by deer is to grow plants that are not appetizing to them. A list of plants *rarely* eaten by deer can be found at Cornell's website:

<http://www.gardening.cornell.edu/factsheets/deerdef/index.html>

Woody plants rarely eaten by deer include American Holly, Common Boxwood and Colorado Blue Spruce. The list for herbaceous plants is quite lengthy and include such flowers as Forget-Me-Nots, Four O'Clocks, Morning Glories, Snapdragons and Sweet Alyssum. The entire list can be found by clicking on *Reducing Deer Damage to Home Gardens and Landscaping Planting* at the above site.

The cute bunny and chubby woodchuck are not fussy and will eat just about anything. The best preventive measure is to put a fence around those plants you don't want eaten. Remember to bury the bottom of the fence 10 to 12 inches underground. The last hint: netting is the most effective method to reduce berry-stealing by birds.

Further information may be found at http://wildlifecontrol.info/chdp/reducingdeer4_05.htm, <http://www.nysaes.cornell.edu/hp/outreach.html>

How Does Your Grass Grow?

Most grasses in New York State are cool-season grasses – Kentucky bluegrass, perennial ryegrass and fescues. The roots of these grasses grow best between 55° F and 65° F. The shoots grow best between 67° F and 75° F. Even before the grass starts to green in the spring, the roots break from dormancy and begin growing.

You may find the combination of long days, cool temperatures and adequate moisture make it hard to keep up with mowing. In a normal year, 60% of grass growth occurs during the first six weeks of spring.

As temperatures warm up during the summer, growth slows down. The combination of warm temperatures and lack of moisture may cause these grasses to become dormant and turn brown. Generally, the grasses haven't died. They will green up and grow again when cool weather and moisture returns.

Learn more about grasses and their care in the booklet, *Lawn Care Without Pesticides*, Information Bulletin 248, available at your local Cornell Cooperative Extension, 249 Highland Ave., Rochester, NY 14620, 585-461-1000.

GREAT LAWNS/GREAT LAKES SURVEY

Thank you to everyone who returned their Great Lawns/Great Lakes survey. Your answers were very encouraging. We received 43 responses and everyone is doing a good job of following environmentally-friendly lawn care practices. Here is a brief summary of your answers to our survey questions. Most of us are do-it-yourselfers; three-quarters of us do not use a lawn care service. We don't spend a lot on lawn care. For a vast majority of us (39), our lawns benefit from having grass clippings left on the lawn to recycle the nutrients back into the soil. Some of us do apply treatments to our lawns, the most common being "weed and feed" which 20 people use. Insecticides/grub control and broadleaf weed control both had 16 responses. For placement of these treatments, 17 apply them to the entire lawn and 13 use them as a spot treatment. Sixteen people answered that they don't use any treatments on their lawn. Excellent efforts are made to keep fertilizers off driveways, and storm drains clear of leaves, further reducing adverse impact on stormwater run-off.

It appears that many people rely on past experiences (28) and/or get lawn care information from the Extension Office (20). This tells us that there is a great deal of lawn care knowledge out there, and that even experienced gardeners find useful information from the Extension. However, there were some findings that suggest some ways the Great Lawns/Great Lakes Program can be improved.

No one disagreed that Integrated Pest Management was an effective strategy to maintain a healthy lawn. However, 12 answered that they had no opinion or did not know. I can only assume that for those 12, the term IPM was unfamiliar or had not been adequately explained. This is very good to know.

Insight into the question of soil testing was also provided. Although 27 of 43 responded that they agree that accurate soil testing provides critical information, 37 individuals responded that they had not had their soil tested in the last two years. There is a discrepancy in numbers here. Soil testing not only points you in the proper direction for lawn care, it can also save you time and energy if a treatment is not needed.

Our lawns and local water are healthier and happier, thanks to your using the lawn care practices you have learned. The information you provided through your answers support the benefits of the Great Lawns/Great Lakes Program and will be helpful for updating and creating programs in the coming year. Thank you so much for your participation!



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